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SUBJECT: OUTCOME OF OPENING MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY OF
DEMOCRACIES WORKING GROUP ON POVERTY, DEVELOPMENT, AND
DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE MARCH 12

REF: STATE 29741

¶1. (SBU) Poloff participated in the March 12, 2007 opening meeting of the Community of Democracies (CD) working group on "poverty, development, and democratic governance" held at the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE) in Mexico City. The

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working group was inaugurated by Mexican Undersecretary of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights Juan Manuel Gomez Robledo and co-chaired by the Government of Argentina. Before opening up the discussions, each roundtable was initiated by a speaker: Round Table 1 "Governance and Democracy," Mr. Luis Huacuja Acevedo, UNAM; Round Table 2 "Development and Democracy," Mr. Dong Nguyen Huu, PNUD; and Round Table 3 "Poverty and Democracy," Mr. Jose Antonio Crespo, CIDE.

¶2. (SBU) Working group discussions were often theoretical and philosophical in nature. Important issues raised included definitions of democracy and its merits and deficiencies, the struggle to eradicate poverty and recognize that economic marginalization can impede political participation, the shared responsibility between governments and civil society, the need to do more to include women and minorities in the democratic process, the importance of understanding trans-national threats to democracy and implications for sovereignty, recognizing that democracy on its own is not a guarantee of development, the requirement of rule of law in effective democracies, and the interdependence between these themes. There was a lengthy discussion about the corrosive effect of structures of privileges in Latin America; democracies that have waited too long to end elite privileges and adequately address poverty and inequality have experienced leftward political tendencies and populist appeal.

¶3. (SBU) Poloff used themes in reftel for the roundtable discussions to explain U.S. positions and, as requested, emphasized the need to initiate concrete proposals, suggesting looking at the negative relationship between corruption and development. Seminar participants agreed to study this issue in depth in the next meeting, incorporating best practices developed by the World Bank and OSCE and also looking at the outcome of the International Anti-Corruption Conference held in Guatemala in November 2006. Other representatives reflected on their countries' respective experiences with democracy and development, with a number arguing that widespread poverty can contaminate democratic life.

¶4. (SBU) The Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (SRE) has prepared a draft document summarizing the discussion at the seminar, which will be forwarded to DRL via facsimile.

Delegations have until March 20 to make comments. The document states specifically that it reflects the discussions of the working group with the aim of not prejudicing or prioritizing issues discussed, and that it does not necessarily reflect the positions of member governments. Post requests that DRL review the draft and provide guidance.

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